Maintaining personal cleanliness was very difficult indeed. Not only did the villagers have to contend with the problem of carrying water but also with the lack of privacy in their crowded dwellings. One peasant said:

"We have no public bathhouse in our village, so only the wealthier people can take baths, because they are able to go to the nearby villages two or three times during the summer and make use of the mineral baths. In general, we do not bathe in fall, winter, or spring. If we bathe in the summer at home, we use a wooden tub and warm water. Sometimes when the weather is warm, men and women [of course, separately] bathe in the river. When the women are bathing there must be someone to guard against their being seen by others. Regularly at least once a week we wash our heads with soap and hot water, and also wash our faces and hands in the morning, but not necessarily with soap. No, we do not wash our hands before every meal, nor do we ever wash our teeth."

Throughout Bulgaria it was a common courtesy to say to a friend who had just emerged from a bath, "*Chestito banya*" or "Congratulations on your bath." However, if one dreamed of bathing, the villager would tell him that some trouble, perhaps death, was imminent.

I was surprised to find that some of the poorest homes had electricity. The occupants explained:

"Oh, we find electricity cheaper than petroleum lamps provided we use small electric bulbs. Those who do not have electricity in their homes know of this advantage but have never saved up enough money to put in the wires."

And there they sat on a winter's night: the older women doing fine, closely stitched embroidery, the girls knitting, and the man perhaps reading a newspaper. The only illumination in the whole room, except for the flicker of the fire in the sheet metal stove, was a fly-specked twenty-watt bulb swinging from the ceiling.

The two or three large kettles hanging over or resting on the floor beside the stove, the knife and fork rack on the wall, and the few pottery dishes stacked on the kneading trough called my attention to the peasant's food habits. This was the way the people described their diet:

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262 "The villagers generally feed themselves well. Of course, it depends upon how rich the family is. But usually we Dragalevtsy people do not think much about the money we give for food and drink. We are not stingy. The people here eat beans, potatoes, rice, cheese, milk, and meat. We do not use tea as food, for it is only water and does not satisfy us."

Here is what another informant added:

"Indeed there is variety in the diet throughout the year. During the summer months we use mainly vegetables produced at home or bought from the market. In the winter we eat potatoes, beans, and conserved foods [chiefly pickles]. Meat, milk, and rice are eaten throughout the whole year. We eat few eggs because we sell most of our eggs in Sofia. Since so many of us keep cows we naturally have begun to give our children milk to drink. We all are very fond of *kiselo mleko* [Bulgarian "sour milk"], which we eat with a spoon during the winter. In the summer it is thinned with water and mixed with garlic, walnuts, and chopped cucumber and is the dish [called *tarator*] that we most prefer on a hot day in the field. Since most of our dishes are stews we use a great deal of bread, which is baked by the women once a week in the ovens standing in the yards just for that purpose."

I had seen a number of large vegetarian restaurants in the city, but the peasants dismissed this Tolstoyan influence in a sentence:

"The people of Dragalevtsy are not so foolish as to eat no meat, for how can man be strong and able to work if he does not eat meat?"

In spite of this point of view the fact remains that the diet is largely vegetarian except for the traditional pig at Christmas, a lamb on Saint George's Day (May 6), milk, and cheese.

264 Food is served either on a *trapeza* (a piece of cloth on the floor) or on the *sofra,* the low table previously described. It was a rare experience to have one's first meal with a peasant family. To begin with, there were no individual plates or dishes; instead, one satisfied his hunger from the nearest dish from which three or four others might be eating. If a chicken had been boiled, the spoons struggled for favorite pieces of fowl; if there was chicken broth, even of a particularly delicious flavor, vinegar was added in quantity to make it

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264 "When we work in the fields we eat five times daily: as soon as we reach the place we have a light lunch *(zakuska)*, at nine we have the *ruchok*, at one dinner, at five another *zakuska*, and in the evening after finishing work we have supper. We older people don't eat between meals but let the children do so if they are hungry."

262 252 From time to time during my stay in the village I tried to teach the tavern cook some simple and uncomplicated western dish to vary the biting peasant food. She tried faithfully but unsuccessfully to comply. After one such hopeless but courteous attempt she read me a little lesson in village menus:

"We Dragalevtsy people are pretty conservative in everything and have added no new dishes to our menu. The western combinations which people eat in Sofia are tasteless and slimy. If one doesn't use lots of salt, hot pepper, and vinegar, then the food has no taste at all."

273 Beverages other than milk and wine made little appeal. Wine was much in evidence on holidays or when there were guests. An average village home would use from 250 to 300 quarts of wine a year. Most of the *rakiya* was drunk either at the taverns or on festive occasions. In commenting on the liquor consumption of the village one man said:

"We are not such fools as not to drink wine, for the wine is transformed into blood and gives strength to man."

000 Someone has said that a house does not become a home until it knows a birth, a wedding, and a death. In other words, it is more than plaster walls, crude furniture, and steaming food. It is even more an association of memories deeply rooted in family crises.

844 [591] A frequently recurring crisis in Dragalevtsy was childbirth, which always took place in a home, never in a hospital. Usually it was the home in which the couple lived, for only rarely did the wife return to her paternal home for the event. When a woman learned that she was pregnant, she told the fact only to her own mother and to her husband, embarrassment preventing further disclosure. The mother-in-law learned about it a month later, for in the words of one of the older village men:

843 [604]

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before filling it for the next in turn; wine followed *rakiya* as the single glass continued to perform its simple function. There was a china cup, to be sure, but it was used by those preferring water.

Then the real ceremony began. The loaves of bread, crudely adorned on top with symbols standing for plows, sheep, the house, and sheaves of wheat, were passed to the head of the household, who broke the loaves with great solemnity. The loaves contained many notched pegs, the number of notches standing for objects on the farm; somewhere in the loaf was also hidden a coin, far more coveted than the notched pieces of wood. I, as the guest, broke open my bread first, only to find a three-notched peg, and was laughingly told that I would have to tend the sheep during the year and would not be as lucky as my neighbor who got the two-notched peg representing the cow. Still luckier was the elder brother who found the one-notched peg representing the house. A shrill shout of joy told at once that Mitko, the eleven-year-old boy, had found the coin and would be the luckiest of all.

The excitement subsided as all began to eat heartily of the special food which the women had been preparing all afternoon. Every home followed the same traditional menu, which featured the meatless main dish of pumpkin pie or *banitsa,* soggy in spite of long baking in hot ashes. The family, in between bites of *banitsa,* spooned with great gusto into the compote of stewed prunes to which pounded garlic and nuts had been added. Everyone had to partake of this for, as the villagers assured me with a twinkle in their eye, "it makes hair grow under the arms."

The other traditional dish was *surmi,* a combination of onions, peppers, raisins, and rice rolled up and stewed in brine-soaked cabbage leaves. The compote and *surmi* were eaten from communal bowls.

The meal was concluded by the serving of withered apples, stored just for this occasion, and nuts cracked in the mouth of a neighbor who soon discovered the guest's unwillingness to risk his teeth for a kernel. As the men got out their cigarettes a girl rose to pass, in lieu of a match, a live coal, held with tongs, from the sheet metal stove.

On important occasions like this, the animals were not forgotten. A piece of the specially prepared bread was dipped into the compote

342 and the stables; in the mountains there are usually structures with many stories. Formerly the windows used to have wooden sashes that ran along a groove and that one could slide to the side, in place of window
262 panes. The style of life is simple; in the country the herders were often contented with sour milk, and the farmers with maize and millet beer.
231 The raising of livestock specializes in cattle, sheep, and goats, and
[221] takes place in the form of a migratory herding system, which commutes back and forth between the mountains in the summer and the plains
241 in the winter. The agriculture produces wheat, maize, barley, and rye, and in the temperate, nay, even hot, South, it cultivates rice, cotton, and sesame; from here, too, come the olive trees, the citrous
412 trees, and the chestnut trees. The hand mill is mostly used only for salt, other kinds of primitive tools have scarcely been preserved. The threshing sled (Figure 9) came from the Orient; it is made of hard planks that have been bent upward at the front and into which sharp-edged fire-stones have been forced. When it is in use it is weighted down enough by the stones and by the weight of the leader to be able to press out the ears of grain. The rattle board (Figure 15) has its counterparts all over ancient Europe. The sawing frame of the wandering wood cutters is an original invention. It includes a box filled with stones which is fastened by two rods and revolves around a horizontal axis, so that by its weight it supports the backward movement of the
291 saw. Through the universal joy in colors and in ornaments the national dress displays a great deal of variety. The basic elements of the men's clothing are a long, rough shirt with a wide cut which is embroidered with colored wool along the chest opening and along the shoulder; cloth or leather trousers, pleated in the Turkish manner in the east, in the west evenly tight-fitting, with a long woollen waistband; and legging-like calf cloths, as well as sandals; a sleeveless jacket or coat-like upper garment with wool trimmings and laces; a sheep's fur or hooded mantle; a dark and low lambskin cap. The women wear blouses with embroidered and crocheted ornamentation, skirts with belts, firmly woven, embroidered apron skirts, sleeveless vests or sleeve jackets, kerchiefs, headdresses and garlands around their fore-
302 heads with fringe bands covered with coins and hanging far down. The
301 girls wear their hair in from 20 to 30 tresses which are held together just below shoulder level by means of chains or buckles with silver coins and pearls, and which, at the end, are gathered together into one single tress (Figure 1). They also have costly ornaments of little gold and silver plates, as well as of filigree work for which the threads were formerly often taken from ancient coins.
7 [see Li Karutz, E1 Europe, Cat. 116, p. 59a --- Analyst]